

CITY OF SANTA CLARA

GUIDE FOR BOARD, COMMISSION AND COMMITTEE APPLICANTS



*150 Years of
Democracy ~ Diversity ~ Distinction
1852 - 2002*

A GUIDE FOR BOARD, COMMISSION AND COMMITTEE APPLICANTS

While membership on a Board, Commission or Committee (referred to collectively as “Commission”) requires no definite qualifications, there are desirable characteristics which the City Council will be looking for as they review applications.

FAMILIARITY WITH COMMUNITY:

The City Council would expect that appointees would have lived in Santa Clara for at least a year prior to their appointment and would be somewhat familiar with the physical, social and economic make-up of the City. Applicants should have demonstrated an active interest and involvement in the community.

FAMILIARITY WITH MAJOR ISSUES:

While it will be assumed that applicants are familiar with the specific issues that are being addressed by the Commission for which they are applying, it is also expected that applicants are aware of far reaching issues which will impact all sectors of City programs and services.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMMISSION:

It is assumed that during the application process, applicants will become familiar with the responsibilities and role of the Commission in the City's policymaking structure.

COMMITMENT TO SERVE:

It is fully expected that when appointed Board, Commission or Committee Members (referred collectively as “Commissioners”) will serve their term of office. While personal or professional circumstances might prompt an unexpected resignation, applicants who are aware of any reasons why they may not be able to complete a full term or attend regularly scheduled meetings, should indicate this on their application.

While time commitments will vary depending upon schedules and workload, Commissioners are expected to attend all scheduled meetings.

In addition to attending scheduled meetings, Commissioners may be expected to participate in study sessions or serve on subcommittees.

RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY:

As a Commissioner, your actions will reflect on the City of Santa Clara; and you will be expected to relate to the community with impartiality and courtesy.

PLEASE NOTE: CITY CHARTER SECTION 1004 REQUIRES THAT ALL MEMBERS OF BOARDS AND/OR COMMISSIONS BE REGISTERED VOTERS IN THE CITY OF SANTA CLARA.

CITY OF SANTA CLARA

TIPS FOR APPLYING FOR A COMMISSION

1. **Type or neatly print your application.** With the number of applications the City Council must review, neatness is a bonus.
2. **Answer all questions on the application.** The City Council reviews your application to get an understanding of your background and experience, and what skills and talents you believe you could bring to a particular Commission. Don not forget to sign your application.
3. **Attend one or two meetings of the Commission for which you are applying.** Find out what kinds of issues the Commission is currently facing and what issues may be coming in the future. Review the minutes of the Commission's meetings which are available in the City Clerk's Office.
4. **Talk to Commissioners.** Contact the City Clerk for a roster of Commissioners. Commissioners can share with you their experience on the Commission, give you an estimate of the time commitment involved in serving on a Commission, and what they see as current and future issues for the Commission.
5. **Talk to Staff Liaisons to the Commission.** Listed on the above-mentioned roster is a City staff member who is assigned to work with a particular Commission and can also be helpful in learning more about the function and role of Commissioners. (City staff cannot recommend or lobby for any applicant for a Commission).
6. **Find out City Council's priorities and interests.** Attend City Council meetings and review meeting minutes. City Council meetings are televised on MCTV Cable Channel 15 and are available on videotape from the City's libraries. Meeting minutes are also available through the City Clerk's Office.
7. **Review the Code of Ethics for Appointed and Elected Officials.** Included in your application materials will be a copy of the Code of Ethics. Review it and understand that if you are appointed to a Commission, you will be required to abide by it.
8. **Prepare for the interview.** Although we do not know what specific questions the City Council will ask, it is suggested that you clarify for yourself why you are applying for a specific Commission, understand the role and function of the Commission, and be familiar with the current issues it is examining.
9. **Treat the interview with the City Council like a business interview.** Professional business dress is appropriate. Understand that the City Council is not only considering what experience, skills and talents you bring to a Commission, but also how well you can represent the City.

Application Process/Appointments

When a vacancy on a Commission occurs, the Deputy City Manager prepares a press release which is distributed to all local media, including the Santa Clara Weekly. The vacancy is announced during a scheduled City Council meeting and on the MCTV Cable Channel 15. Copies of the announcement are sent to those individuals on the list of interested parties. Anyone may have their name added to the list of interested parties to be notified; this list is kept by the City Clerk.

Applications for vacancies are obtained from the City Clerk's Office. Completed applications are submitted to the City Clerk's Office. Three to four weeks after the vacancy announcement, the completed applications are forwarded to the City Council in the regular agenda packets for public review. The City Council interviews all applicants (except for the Youth Commission) at a date certain. The official appointment of Commissioners is made at a City Council meeting by at least four affirmative votes of the City Council.

Youth Commission applications shall be distributed and available to middle school and high school students in the City of Santa Clara. The Staff Liaison will coordinate the interview process. Student volunteers from Santa Clara University and Mission College will be selected to review the application forms and conduct interviews with the qualified applicants. The list of recommendations and alternates to the Youth Commission membership will be submitted to the City Council. City Council approval will be required for final selection and appointment of Youth Commissioners.

Term of Office

Commissioners generally are appointed for four-year terms. (Except the Youth Commission - see below). The terms usually overlap so that every July 1, the term of at least one member of each Commission may expire. The City Council may reappoint an existing member or fill the vacancy with a new applicant.

The maximum time a Commissioner may serve is two consecutive terms for all Commissions except the Youth Commission; and also if an individual is appointed to fill a partial term (if someone resigns mid-term), he or she may still serve two additional terms of office. After a lapse of at least two years, an individual is eligible to reapply to serve on the same Commission. The same application process would apply as for individuals who have never served. Individuals may apply to serve on a different Commission once their term of office expires for their current commitment (minutes of City Council meetings 12/1/59 and 10/17/78).

The term of office officially begins when the new member takes the oath of office, administered by the City Clerk, and meets with the Staff Liaison to the Commission. There is no monetary compensation or benefits for Commissioners.

Youth Commission Exceptions

Youth Commissioners serve one-year terms and may serve a maximum of four terms.

Disclosure Statements

Economic Conflicts of Interests

Disclosure statements must be filed by Planning Commissioners, Civil Service Commissioners and Housing Rehabilitation Loan Committee Members.

Members of these three entities are required to file an Annual Statement of Economic Interests and disclose the investments and interest in real property held and income received during the reporting period. Newly-appointed members to these groups must file an Assuming Office Statement that discloses any investments or interests in real property held by the member on the date he or she assumed office. The statement must also disclose income received during the twelve (12) months prior to the date the office was assumed.

The City Clerk administers disclosure statements and maintains original file copies of all statements. These are available for public review in the City Clerk's Office. The statements of Planning Commissioners are forwarded to the Fair Political Practices Commission and copies are retained for public review in the City Clerk's Office.

No contracts with the City.

Commissioners cannot have any contracts with the City. Penalties for violation of Government Code Section 1090 are severe: the contract is invalidated, the individual is disqualified for life from public office, and the individual can be charged with criminal action.

PURPOSE

How commissioners serve the citizens of Santa Clara

“You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give.”
Winston Churchill

Commissions play a critical role in the City of Santa Clara. They serve as a conduit for citizen input - a way of gathering, analyzing and recommending options to the City Council which has the final responsibility for making policy decisions. City staff can provide professional and technical expertise and, of course, any citizen can come before the City Council to offer an opinion or make a suggestion. Commissions provide another, important avenue for determining the community's feelings about an issue. The individuals who serve on Commissions are among the most respected and appreciated volunteers in the community.

The formal description of the roles and responsibilities of Commissions, as set in the City Charter and City Code, is included in the back of this guide. Here is a brief summary of how Commissions serve the democratic process in the City of Santa Clara.

The purpose of Commissions in Santa Clara is to . . .

- hold public hearings and use other means to determine how the community feels about issues related to their respective fields.
- recommend policies and procedures related to their respective fields to the City Council.
- serve as an intermediary between the public, City staff, and the City Council by providing information, explanation, and support for different points of view.
- exemplify the mission statement of City government in Santa Clara which is "to promote a living and working environment that allows for the best quality of life by serving the community with resourceful, efficient, progressive and professional leadership."

CITY GOVERNMENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Putting Commissions into context

"Those in high places are more than the administrators of government bureaus. They are more than the writers of law. They are the custodians of a nation's ideals, of the beliefs it cherishes, of its permanent hopes, of the faith which makes a nation out of a mere aggregation of individuals."

Walter Lippmann

The City of Santa Clara is a Charter City, incorporated in 1852 under the laws of the State of California. Santa Clara uses a Council-Manager form of government. The City Council serves as the legislative body, sets policies and procedures, and represents the citizens of Santa Clara. The City Manager, as the Chief Executive Officer appointed by the City Council, implements City Council policies and procedures. The City Attorney and the City Auditor are also appointed by the City Council while the City Clerk and the Chief of Police are full-time elected positions.

City Council

The Santa Clara City Council, the governing body of the City, is made up of six council members and a directly elected mayor, who are elected in a non-partisan election and serve "at large," representing the whole City, not a particular district. The City Council is accountable to the citizens it serves. Elections are held in November of even calendar years except when special elections are held. City Council members and the Mayor serve four-year terms and each may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. Three council terms are up in one election; three other council terms and the Mayor's term are up two years later. (More specific details can be found in the City Charter).

The City Council formulates policy, approves programs, appropriates funds and establishes local taxes and assessments. The decisions of the City Council are reached by a majority vote. The City Council enacts local laws (ordinances) and regulations for governing of the City. The local ordinances adopted by the City Council are compiled in the municipal code. Other City Council directives and policies are recorded in resolutions or council minutes.

The Santa Clara City Council meets generally on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall. Copies of the City Council agenda are available 72 hours before the meetings at the City Clerk's Office, Central Park Library, Mission Library and on the City's website <www.ci.santa-clara.ca.us>. Agenda packets, which contain the agenda and information on each agenda item, are available in the City Clerk's Office and both libraries. Summaries of the actions from previous City Council meetings can be found on the City's website.

City Council meetings are broadcast live on MCTV Cable Channel 15. Tapes of the City Council meetings are also rebroadcast on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. and Thursdays at 1:00 p.m. Call 615-2210 for broadcast information. Tapes of the meetings are also placed at both City libraries for check-out by patrons. City Council agenda highlights and other municipal announcements appear weekly on MCTV Cable Channel 15.

City Manager

The City Manager is the chief executive officer and the head of the administrative branch of the City government. The City Manager is appointed by the City Council.

The City Manager implements policies and procedures initiated by the City Council, prepares and administers the municipal budget, advises the City Council of future financial needs of the City, initiates and supervises business relationships, and directs the daily operations of City government. The use of City-owned property is handled through the City Manager's Office, as are economic development, community and media relations, special projects, research and contracts, emergency services, training and safety, redevelopment, special agency activities, and the overall general administration budget. The City Manager is responsible for all City personnel and serves as a liaison to each commission. The City Manager also serves as the Executive Director of the Redevelopment Agency and Contract Administrator for the Sports and Open Space Authority. Activities of these agencies are coordinated through the City Manager's Office.

City Clerk

The City Clerk is an elected official responsible for the recording, writing and maintenance of City Council proceedings. The City Clerk conducts municipal elections, publishes ordinances and processes resolutions and other official City documents. The City Clerk stores and indexes official documents and City records for retrieval, administers Conflict of Interest disclosures and Campaign Disclosure Statements filed under the Political Reform Act and is the custodian of the seal of the City.

City Attorney

The City Attorney is appointed by the City Council. The City Attorney advises the City Council and City officers (in their official capacity) in legal matters, attends all Council meetings and some Commission meetings, represents the City in legal actions and proceedings, and retains, supervises and monitors outside legal counsel. The office of the City Attorney also approves the form of all bonds and contracts made by the City, prepares/approves all ordinances, resolutions and amendments for the City, and prosecutes criminal cases for violation of the Charter and of City ordinances.

The members of the City Attorney's Office (attorneys and staff) maintain an attorney-client relationship with the City officers, agents and employees, so their official communications are protected as confidential attorney-client privilege.

Redevelopment Agency

The Redevelopment Agency was created by the Santa Clara City Council in 1957 in order to help revitalize certain areas of the City. The City Council serves as the Redevelopment Agency Board. The Mayor is the Chair, the Vice Mayor is the Vice-Chair, the City Manager is the Executive Director, the City Clerk is the Secretary and the Director of Finance is the Treasurer of the Agency. The Redevelopment Agency meets immediately following the City Council meetings.

Santa Clara has two Redevelopment project areas - the University Project and the Bayshore North Project. Redevelopment Agency projects have included the Santa Clara Convention Center, Great America Theme Park, and projects for low and moderate income housing.

Sports and Open Space Authority (SOSA)

The Sports and Open Space Authority was created by the Santa Clara City Council in 1975 to handle any sports and open space projects, such as the City golf course. The City Council serves as the Sports and Open Space Authority Board. The Mayor is the Chair, Vice Mayor is the Vice-Chair, the City

Manager is the Contract Administrator, the City Clerk is the Secretary and the Director of Finance is the Director of Finance for the Authority. Since its creation, the Sports and Open Space Authority has been involved in a number of successful projects including the Santa Clara Golf and Tennis Club. The Sports and Open Space Authority meets immediately following the Redevelopment Agency meetings.

Boards, Commissions, Committees

The City of Santa Clara currently has 10 advisory groups categorized as a board, commission or committee (referred to collectively as "Commissions"). Each has a specific focus and serves to make recommendations to the City Council on issues related to that specific field. The City Manager is the official liaison to each group and either serves personally as the liaison or appoints a staff member to serve in this capacity.

Members of Commissions are volunteers who are appointed by the City Council and serve at the pleasure of the City Council. Commissioners must be residents of Santa Clara or, in the case of the Youth Commission, attend Santa Clara schools.

Members of Charter-established Commissions (Planning Commission, Civil Service Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission and the Board of Library Trustees) have the power to administer oaths and affirmations in any investigation or proceeding pending before that group. Generally, only the Planning Commission, Civil Service Commission and Housing Rehabilitation Loan Committee conduct investigations or proceedings.

Santa Clara's Boards, Commissions and Committees

Meeting Dates, Times and Places

Board of Library Trustees

Generally 1st Monday, 7:00 p.m.

Central Park Library
2635 Homestead Road

Advises the City Council on issues related to the operation of the Santa Clara Public Library. (5 members)

Civil Service Commission

Generally 2nd Monday, 7:00 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers
1500 Warburton Avenue

Advises the City Council on matters pertaining to Civil Service rules and regulations and serves as a Board of Review to hear petitions by Civil Service employees and applicants. (5 members)

Cultural Advisory Commission

Generally 1st Monday, 7:30 p.m.

City Hall Staff Conference Room
1500 Warburton Avenue

Advises the City Council on cultural enrichment and beautification. (7 members)

Historical and Landmarks Commission

Generally 1st Thursday, 7:00 p.m.

City Hall Staff Conference Room
1500 Warburton Avenue

Advises the City Council on historical landmarks, names and renaming of streets, and the marking and preservation of historical landmarks. (7 members)

Housing Rehabilitation Loan Committee

Quarterly

Housing and Community
Services Division
1500 Civic Center Drive

Reviews projects and issues related to the Community Services Division Neighborhood Conservation and Improvement Program (NCIP) which utilizes federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Act Program monies to rehabilitate homes of low to moderate income homeowners who reside within the City limits. (4 members)

International Exchange Commission

Generally 1st Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.

City Hall Staff Conference Room
1500 Warburton Avenue

Advises the City Council on Santa Clara's two sister-cities – Coimbra, Portugal and Izumo, Japan – and other matters related to international exchange. (7 members)

Parks and Recreation Commission

Generally 3rd Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.

City Hall Staff Conference Room
1500 Warburton Avenue

Advises the City Council on parks, recreation, playgrounds and entertainment. (7 members)

Planning Commission

Generally 2nd and 4th Wednesdays,
7:00 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers
1500 Warburton Avenue

Makes recommendations to the City Council on land subdivisions, zoning as prescribed by ordinance, and other land use matters related to the physical development of the City. (7 members)

**Senior Citizens
Commission**

Generally 4th Monday, 10:00 a.m.

Senior Center
1303 Fremont Street
(Interim location –
Community Recreation Center,
969 Kiely Boulevard)

Advises the City Council on issues affecting people age 50 and older in Santa Clara. (7 members)

**Youth
Commission**

Generally 2nd Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.
September through May

Teen Center
2446 Cabrillo Avenue

Advises the City Council on community programs for youth and teens and encourages youth involvement in local government. (15 members)

Specific Responsibilities of Commissions

Board of Library Trustees

There shall be a Board of Library Trustees consisting of five members to be appointed by the City Council from the qualified electors of the City and no member of said Board shall hold any paid office or employment in the City government. (Charter Sec. 1012)

The Board of Library Trustees shall have charge of the administration of the Santa Clara Free Public Library and shall have power and be required to:

- (a) Make and enforce such by-laws, rules and regulations as it may deem necessary for the administration and protection of the City library;
- (b) Approve or disapprove the appointment of a librarian who shall be the department head;
- (c) Accept into the library fund and administer money, personal property or real estate donated to the City or otherwise acquired for library purposes subject to the approval of the City Council;
- (d) Contract with school, county or other governmental agencies to render or receive library services or facilities, subject to the approval of the City Council. (Charter Sec. 1013)

The Board of Library Trustees shall be primarily responsible for the following:

- (a) Establishing, accepting and supervising a significant public library program.
- (b) Providing for balanced library collections and services which represent the diverse perspectives of the community.
- (c) Making recommendations to the City Council on library policies which ensure maximum public access to library collections and services.
- (d) Serving as a central focus for citizen comment on library operations and materials and the provision of appropriate recommendations or response.
- (e) Supporting educational, recreational and cultural activities for citizens of all age groups, consistent with the mission of the library program.
- (f) Representing the library program to the City, the community, other government agencies and organizations.
- (g) Performing such other duties and exercising such powers as the City Council may impose or require. (City Code Section 2.120.080)

Civil Service Commission

There shall be a Civil Service Commission consisting of five members to be appointed by the City Council from the qualified electors of the City, none of whom shall hold any paid office or employment in the City government. (Charter Sec. 1010)

The Civil Service Commission is charged with the duty of:

- (a) The Civil Service Commission is charged with the duty of providing qualified persons for appointment to the service of the City. All appointments in the public service shall be made for the good of that service, and solely upon merit and fitness, as established by appropriate test, without regard to partisan politics, race, color or religious belief.
- (b) Act as Board of Review to hear petitions by civil service employees, and applicants for civil service positions, and to grant or deny such petitions.
- (c) Perform such other duties as may be required by the civil service rules and regulations. (Charter Sec. 1011)

The Civil Service Commission shall be primarily responsible for the following:

- (a) The establishment, acceptance and continued supervision of a well-rounded civil service program.
- (b) The recruiting, examining and establishing of a list of eligibles for appointment to the City service in accordance with established merit principles.
- (c) The hearing of appeals by members of the classified service and acting upon the same. (City Code Section 2.120.070)

Cultural Advisory Commission

The Cultural Advisory Commission shall consist of seven members, whose members shall not hold any paid office or employment in the City government, and shall be primarily responsible for the following:

- (a) Act in an advisory capacity to the City Council in all matters pertaining to cultural enrichment and beautification of the city.
- (b) Encourage the beautification of the City and programs for the cultural enrichment of the City.
- (c) Perform such other duties and exercise such powers as the City Council may impose or require. (City Code Section 2.120.090).

Historical and Landmarks Commission

The Historical and Landmarks Commission shall consist of seven members, whose members shall not hold any paid office or employment in the City government, and shall have power and be required to do the following:

- (a) Act in an advisory capacity to the City Council in all matters pertaining to historical landmarks, names and renaming of streets, museums and the establishment thereof in the City, and the marking and preservation of historical landmarks and places.
- (b) Exercise such other functions as it may be required to perform by the City Council.
(City Code Section 1.120.100)

International Exchange Commission

The International Exchange Commission shall consist of seven members, whose members shall not hold any paid office or employment in the City government, and shall have the following powers, functions, and duties:

- (a) Act in an advisory capacity to the City Council in all matters pertaining to sister-city relationships and international exchanges.
- (b) Assist in the planning and supervision of international exchange activities with our sister communities, sharing friendship, skills, and concerns.
- (c) Develop people-to-people contacts designed to enhance international communication and understanding.
- (d) Encourage educational, cultural, sports, technical, and governmental exchanges to help acquaint citizens of Santa Clara with cultural and political diversity abroad. (City Code Section 2.120.120)

Parks and Recreation Commission

There shall be a City Parks and Recreation Commission consisting of seven members to be appointed by the City Council from the qualified electors of the City, none of whom shall hold any paid office or employment in the City government. (Charter Sec. 1008)

The Parks and Recreation Commission shall have power and be required to:

- (a) Act in advisory capacity to the City Council in all matters pertaining to parks, recreation, playgrounds and entertainment;
- (b) Consider the annual budget of the Parks and Recreation Department during the process of its preparation and make recommendations with respect thereto to the City Manager and the City Council; and
- (c) Assist in the planning and supervision of a recreation program for the inhabitants of the City, promote and stimulate public interest therein and to that end, solicit to the fullest extent possible the cooperation of school authorities and other public and private agencies interested therein.
(Charter Section 1009)

The Parks and Recreation Commission shall be primarily responsible for the following:

- (a) The establishment, acceptance and continued supervision of a long-range parks and recreational program for the City.
- (b) Planning and implementing an annual program of recreational and cultural activities for all age groups.
- (c) Recommending and supervising all the City's contractual relationships with other agencies in the recreational field.
- (d) Serve as a correlating agency between the City and other units of government on recreational undertakings.
- (e) The planning and supervision of the City cemetery. (City Code Section 2.120.060)

Planning Commission

There shall be a City Planning Commission consisting of seven members to be appointed by the City Council from the qualified electors of the City, none of whom shall hold any paid office or employment in the City government except that the City Manager, and the Director of Public Works and Utilities, or their designated representatives, shall serve as ex-officio members of the commission. (Charter Sec. 1006)

The Planning Commission shall have power and be required to:

- (a) After a public hearing thereon, recommend to the City Council the adoption, amendment, or repeal of the General Plan or any part thereof for the physical development of the City;
- (b) Exercise such functions with respect to land subdivisions, planning, and zoning as may be prescribed by ordinance; and
- (c) Exercise such planning, zoning, environmental or other function as now or may be hereafter authorized by the provisions of the State of California in so far as they do not conflict with the provisions of this Charter. (Charter Section 1007)

The Planning Commission shall be primarily responsible for and have the following duties:

- (a) The establishment, acceptance and continued supervision of a long-range master plan for the future development of the City.
- (b) The proper application and preservation of the zoning and land use regulations of the City and recommending such revisions and amendments as may be deemed necessary.
- (c) The processing of subdivision tract maps and property development applications in accordance with prescribed standards.
- (d) Serve as a correlating agency for the capital improvement program of the City.
(City Code Section 1.120.050)

Senior Advisory Commission

The Senior Advisory Commission shall consist of seven members who shall not hold any paid office or employment in the City government, and shall have the following powers, functions, and duties:

- (a) Study, review, evaluate and make recommendations to the City Council relative to any and all matters affecting elderly people in the City of Santa Clara.
- (b) Make such studies and submit to the Council such reports or recommendations respecting matters affecting elderly people, and such matters as the Council may from time to time request.
(City Code Section 2.120.110)

Youth Commission

The Youth Commission shall consist of no more than fifteen youth members who shall be residents of the City and be primarily responsible for the following:

- (a) To act in an advisory capacity to the City Council in all matters pertaining to the youth and teen population within Santa Clara, especially as related to municipal programs and projects of the City.
- (b) To perform such other related functions as may be assigned to them by the City Council.

Additional powers and duties of the Youth Commission shall be as determined by the City Council, by resolution, and may be amended, from time to time, to properly reflect changes in qualifications, composition and responsibilities of the Youth Commission as the City Council deems necessary. (City Code Section 2.120.130)

Housing Rehabilitation Loan Committee

The Loan Committee meets quarterly to vote on projects and issues related to the Community Services Division Neighborhood Conservation and Improvement Program (NCIP) which utilizes federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnerships Act Entitlement (HOME) monies to rehabilitate homes of low to moderate income homeowners who reside within the City limits.